

Message Text

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ACTION VO-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SCA-01 CIAE-00 FBIE-00 INSE-00

NSAE-00 L-02 /013 W

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R 182025Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7189

INFO AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN

AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO

AMEMBASSY KINGSTON

AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE PORT OF SPAIN 2938

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CVIS TD

SUBJECT: VISAS: NIV REFUSAL NOTATION IN PASSPORTS

FOR VO AND ARA/CAR

REF: CA-591 DATED FEBRUARY 4, 1971 AND A-7280 DATED SEPTEMBER 19,
1974

1. EMBASSY MAKES NIV REFUSAL NOTATIONS IN PASSPORTS OF ALIENS WHO
HAVE APPLIED FOR AND BEEN REFUSED NONIMMIGRANT VISAS, PER INSTRUCTIONS

IN REFERENCED CA'S.

2. HOWEVER, OFFICIALS FROM THE IMMIGRATION SERVICE OF THE GOVERNMENT
OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO HAVE APPROACHED THIS OFFICE ABOUT A PROBLEM
OF GROWING PROPORTIONS WITH WHICH THEY ARE FACED, AND WHICH
APPEARS TO RELATE TO THE ENTRIES WHICH WE MAKE IN REFUSED VISA
CASES: APPLICATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO
(GOTT) FOR NEW PASSPORTS TO REPLACE LOST OR STOLEN PASSPORTS,
OR PASSPORTS WHICH HAVE BEEN MUTILATED, HAVE INCREASED 500 PERCENT
IN THE PAST YEAR, AND THE OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT THEY CAN RELATE A
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VERY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF THESE REQUESTS TO CITIZENS OF TRINIDAD

AND TOBAGO WHO HAVE BEEN REFUSED NONIMMIGRANT VISAS HERE. IT IS THEIR BELIEF THAT THE ANNOTATION INSIDE THE BACK COVER REPRESENTS, IN THE MIND OF THE PASSPORT BEARERS, A STIGMA, OR A BLACK MARK, AND THE HOLDERS ARE CONVINCED THAT WITH THE NOTATION THEY ARE FOREVER UNABLE TO OBTAIN A VISA OR ENTRY IN THE UNITED STATES.

3. THE OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT THE PROBLEM LIES NOT IN THE PURPOSE OF THE NOTATION, BUT IN ITS FORM AND THE UNDERSTANDING (OR MIS-UNDERSTANDING) THAT THE PASSPORT BEARERS HAVE. THEY HAVE REQUESTED THAT WE CONSIDER AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD, SUCH AS A SMALL RUBBER STAMP BEARING THE LEGEND "US EMB. PORT OF SPAIN" ON THE FIRST LINE AND "VISA APPLIED FOR" ON THE SECOND LINE, WITH THE MONTH AND YEAR TO BE ADDED IN INK BY THE OFFICER. SUCH A STAMP, PERHAPS ENCLOSED IN BOXED LINES AND BEING SLIGHTLY SMALLER THAN AN INS ENTRY STAMP, WOULD, THEY BELIEVE, BE MUCH MORE UNDERSTANDABLE BY AND ACCEPTABLE TO THE PASSPORT BEARERS, AND WOULD ELIMINATE THEIR COMPULSION TO HAVE THE PASSPORT REPLACED.

4. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THIS REQUEST IS REASONABLE, AND THAT THE ALTERNATIVE METHOD JUST DISCUSSED COULD BE ADOPTED WITH NO LOSS AS COMPARED TO THE PRESENT SYSTEM. THERE IS AN ADDITIONAL ELEMENT WHICH WE WOULD NOTE IN RECOMMENDING THAT THIS "STAMP" METHOD BE USED: WITH OUR 30-40 PERCENT NIV REFUSAL RATE, WE HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF MUCH CRITICISM IN THE PRESS AND AMONG PEOPLE WHOM WE MEET ALLEGING THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND ITS OFFICERS AT THE EMBASSY ARE TOO HARSH AND RESTRICTIVE IN THEIR POLICIES AND IN THEIR PROCESSING OF NONIMMIGRANT VISA CASES; AND THAT THE CITIZENS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO ARE BEING DISCRIMINATED AGAINST BECAUSE OF RACIAL ATTITUDES. THE OFFICIALS OF THE IMMIGRATION SERVICE, WHILE NOT PERSONALLY APPEARING TO SHARE THAT BELIEF, RECENTLY HAVE BEEN GIVING US A "COLD SHOULDER" IN OFFICIAL MATTERS. WE BELIEVE THAT IF WE COULD RESPOND TO THIS REQUEST IN SOLVING THEIR PROBLEM IT WOULD SHOW THEM THAT WE DESIRE TO COOPERATE AND THAT IT WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL IN ESTABLISHING A BETTER WORKING RELATIONSHIP.

5. ALTHOUGH THIS IS THE FIRST OFFICIAL OVERTURE TO US REGARDING THE PASSPORT COVER NOTATIONS, OTHER WELL-PLACED OFFICIALS OF THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO GOVERNMENT HAVE SEPARATELY LET US KNOW EARLIER THAT THEY CONSIDERED THE INFORMAL NOTATIONS BEING MADE BY THE AMERICAN EMBASSY A SERIOUS MATTER AND POSSIBLY CONSTITUTING "MUTILATION" OF OFFICIAL TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO PASSPORTS. THESE OFFICIALS HAVE INDICATED THAT, IF WE DID NOT FIND SOME METHOD TO MAKE ANY DESIRED ENTRY IN A FORMAL MANNER DULY INDICATING THE PURPOSE OF THE ENTRY AND THE NAME OF THE OFFICIAL OR ENTITY MAKING THE ENTRY, THAT SERIOUS CHARGES

MIGHT BE RAISED. WHILE THE SITUATION HAS NOT YET QUITE REACHED THIS STAGE, WE DO CONSIDER THE DIRECT APPROACH BY OFFICIALS OF THE GOTT IMMIGRATION SERVICE AS THE NEXT STEP IN A DIALOGUE WHICH IS BEING WATCHED BY A NUMBER OF SENIOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HERE TO DETERMINE WHETHER THIS EMBASSY WILL COOPERATE. IF WE ARE NOT ABLE TO DO SO, WE ANTICIPATE A DIRECT DEMAND FROM THE GOTT TO CEASE PLACING ANY INFORMAL NOTATIONS IN TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO PASSPORTS HENCEFORTH. IF THE SITUATION SHOULD REACH THAT POINT THE DEMAND WOULD LIKELY BE COUPLED WITH OFFICIALLY SANCTIONED ADVERSE PUBLICITY AGAINST THE OVERALL VISA ACTIVITY OF THIS EMBASSY.

6. FOR THESE REASONS WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND THE DEPARTMENT'S PROMPT CONSIDERATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS HEREIN.

7. NOTE: THE TWO DEPARTMENT CA'S REFERENCED ARE THE ONLY MATERIAL ON SUBJECT NOW AVAILABLE AT THIS POST. OUR CONSULAR OFFICERS BELIEVE THAT THERE WAS A FOLLOW-UP OF CA-591 IN 1971., DISCUSSING THE RATIONALE OF THE ENTRY. IT IS REQUESTED THAT A COPY OF THAT COMMUNICATION BE FORWARDED TO THE EMBASSY.
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